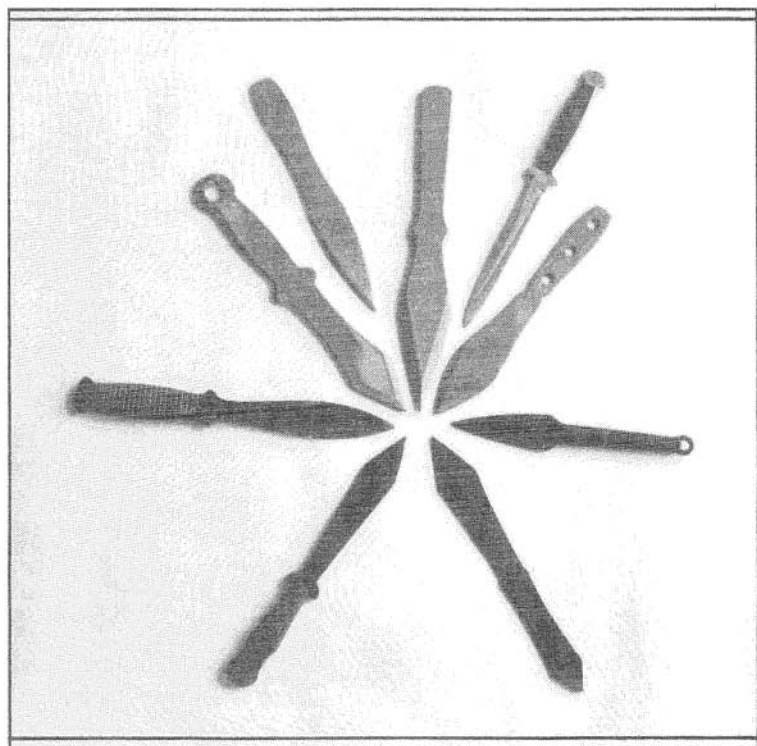


# KNIFE THROWING TECHNIQUES OF THE NINJA



By Michael E. Peters

**BUTOKUKAI, INC.**

Cornville, Arizona 86325

# **KNIFE THROWING TECHNIQUES OF THE NINJA**

© 1986

**BUTOKUKAI, INC.**

**NKTC**

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, except for purposes of review, without written permission of the publisher.



**BUTOKUKAI, INC.**

Cornville, Arizona 86325

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Prologue — Blades of the Ninja .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Section One:</b>	
<b>Obtaining and Maintaining Throwing Knives .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Section Two:</b>	
<b>Throwing Methods .....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Section Three:</b>	
<b>Training Methods and Safety Concerns .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Section Four:</b>	
<b>Knife Throwing in Combat .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Section Five:</b>	
<b>Defense Against Thrown Knives .....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Afterword .....</b>	<b>45</b>

**— WARNING —**

**Neither author nor the publisher assumes any responsibility for the use or misuse of the information contained in this book.**

# INTRODUCTION

A knife is the first weapon given to a Ninja. He or she learns Tanto-jitsu, knife art. As well as becoming an expert in hand-to-hand combat, a Ninja learns to throw knives, as well as many other objects. But some knives are designed specifically for throwing. With such specialty knives, the Ninja knife throwing expert is particularly dangerous. Normally, a Ninja carries four such throwing knives as well as a *combat knife* which could be thrown if necessary.

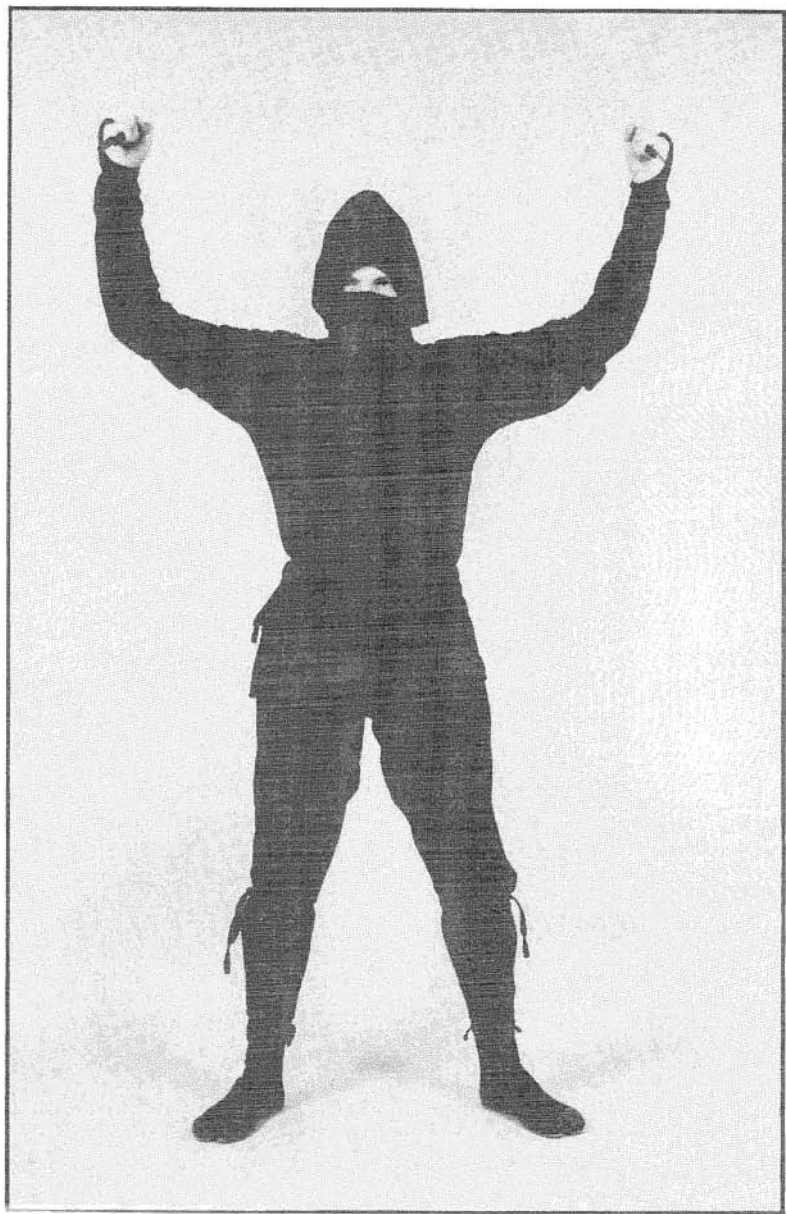
Ninja throw knives, primarily, to achieve three goals:

To distract.

To wound.

To kill.

With practice and hard work, a Ninja can learn to accomplish all three of these goals, but the last purpose is difficult to achieve, and requires the utmost skill and dedication. This book was developed for practicing Ninja who wish to round out their training. Only western style throwing weapons are covered. For information on oriental throwing devices, a serious Ninja should obtain a copy of *Throwing the Ninja Star of Death*, the companion edition to this book, which was also written by Michael E. Peters and published by Butokukai.



# **PROLOGUE**

## **BLADES OF THE NINJA**

Kenji knew that he must be careful about how he entered captured, Hon Castle. Even though he was disguised as a merchant from a distant province, that would mean nothing to Lord Katsugami's brutal occupation troops. They would treat and search him roughly, disgusted at even having to touch a member of the lower classes. He would have to cower before them and appear to be submissive. One wrong look, just meeting the eyes of one of the Samurai, would be taken as an infraction, reflecting great disrespect for the warrior class. A deadly iai-jitsu draw and cut would follow, aimed at the neck of such a vile, disrespectful merchant. On top of everything else, most of the soldiers would be drinking, celebrating their recent victory. After raping and pillaging an entire province, they would need little excuse to spill the blood of a defenseless merchant.

The young Ninja knew that he might suffer great indignities at the hands of the invaders, but only if they tried to slay him would he be forced to defend himself and try to escape. But that must not happen; he might escape or he might be killed, but either way his mission would fail, and it would then be even more difficult for the next Ninja spy to get in. The enemy would increase their security.

His only hope was to slip in and complete his mission while the invaders were still occupied by sacking the countryside and celebrating their victory. They were not even aware that in triumph they were vulnerable. Kenji hoped to teach the invaders a bitter lesson for invading his homeland.

## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

The Ninja Clan to which he belonged was allied with the other side. He was being sent to gather information. Rumor had it that the invader's finest general, who had orchestrated the successful siege of Hon Castle, had been seriously wounded by an arrow during the final battle. If the rumor proved to be true, with late reinforcements, the defending armies would launch a counterattack, regain the castle and crush the enemy. Without their finest leader, the invaders would be routed.

Knowing that he would be thoroughly searched, Kenji was only lightly armed with the tanto dagger which most traveling merchants were allowed to carry. He also carried four flat, superbly balanced throwing knives, which were cleverly concealed in the sides of a wooden box which he used to carry some of his wares. He was selling decorative handguards for swords. Each of the tsuba were made by a famous artisan. Along with those items and the clothes on his back, Kenji carried nothing out of the ordinary for which a merchant would be found. He prepared himself mentally as he approached the outer gate. His performance had to be calculated and perfect.

"Dog!" one of the guards screamed at him, ripping Kenji's pack off his shoulders. "What garbage have you come to peddle?" The man was half drunk.

Kenji bowed unceasingly as he trembled to his knees. "Mighty warriors, most honorable lords, I come to you bearing many fine tsuba, fashioned by the reknowned artisan, Mitsunari of Mido. Perhaps you have heard of him? They would be most worthy of your . . ."

The back of an armored hand cuffed him. His pack was emptied on top of him, and the guard began to pick through the merchant's possessions, flinging items to the laughing soldiers nearby. "There is nothing of value here," the guard howled. "Only junk. We will throw it away for you and relieve you of the burden of carrying it."

"Hold it, you fool," an authoritative voice said. Out of the corner of his eye, Kenji saw an older Samurai on horseback, snapping a resplendent fan at the guards, who sprang to attention as quickly as they could. The rider turned to Kenji.



"Did I hear you say Mitsunari of Mido?"

"Yes, mighty lord," Kenji muttered through his tears. He did not dare look up.

"Guard!" the leader snapped. "Bring one of those." He pointed at the handguards which had spilled from the box onto the stones. Hurriedly the brutal guard picked up one tsuba, bowed, and handed it to the rider, who examined its workmanship closely.

"Hmmm, it is indeed the work of that famous artisan; I know his skill well. It is old, from the days before the peak of his mastery, but good work nevertheless. You will be given a pass for food and lodging for one night. Seek out the retainers of my house this evening, where you see my standard. I will examine your merchandise more closely at that time." The rider turned once more to the guards. "Do as I have said with this merchant, and see that no harm comes to him within these walls. Trouble him no more or I shall hear of it. The artistry he bears is worth more than the lot of you! Now stand your posts. Stop drinking. The enemy is still in the mountains. They may yet try to regain the castle."

"Thank you, gracious lord," Kenji said, bowing repeatedly. The rider spurred his horse and rode into the castle. Kenji was left to gather up his belongings. What was taken was not returned, and the guards scowled at him when he took his pass from them. Slinging his pack over his shoulder, he scurried off onto the castle grounds.

Once inside, he was directed to the rooms of the lord who had taken interest in his goods. He made an appointment and took his meal, doing nothing to attract suspicion. In the evening, he met the lord, and made a fine sale. Appearing pleased and tired, he was given a place among the servants for the night.

Once night fell, Kenji's real work began. He turned his clothing inside-out and changed from his merchant disguise into his black Ninja uniform. For weapons he had the merchant dagger in his belt and the four throwing knives from the wooden box. He had caught sight of the standard of the enemy's top general earlier in the day. Cautiously he made his way through the shadows of the captured castle

## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

toward the general's quarters in order to spy on the general's condition.

Upon reaching the general's quarters, he found them as he had expected them to be—heavily guarded. Kenji was forced to make his way silently up onto the roof and cautiously down into the rafters above the general's room. Once there, the young Ninja listened for a great while, detecting the sounds of two people sleeping. He could tell from the way that they were breathing that they were deep in slumber. Kenji could not see much from his vantage point, despite the dim moonlight bathing the chamber. He had to climb down into the chamber. Silently he lowered himself slowly into the chamber by means of a thin strong rope. Immediately he caught sight of two guards sitting by the door. As soon as his feet touched the floor, he drew two of his throwing knives, retreated, and crouched in the shadows of the room. But neither of the guards moved; it was they who were sleeping.

Quickly he made his way to the general's bed. The general lay in the bed, but he was stone dead. It was a ruse to fool spies. The general's body had even been embalmed and covered with a thin layer of wax. For proof, Kenji took the general's ring. Quickly but carefully, he made his way back to his quarters and gathered his things. He had the information for which he had come, and he would leave that very night to inform his clients.

Strangely enough, the same drunken Samurai guards who had bullied him were at the gate when he went to leave. Kenji was on his guard. He had his knives concealed on him still.

"Well, merchant," the leader of the guards said, "did you do well?"

"Yes, great warrior, your lord was most gracious. I am on my way to board a ship now. I have passage to leave."

"Very well then. But there are brigands and ronin about, waiting to cut the throats of fortunate merchants. Our lord gave us charge to see that no harm befell you within the gates. Let us escort you beyond them as well. You are only armed with that puny dagger, a pitiful weapon against an enemy."

"You are most kind," Kenji said. The leader and two other

## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

Samurai lead him out of the city and down the road. After they had travelled far away from the castle, the three bushi stopped.

"Here we must leave you," the leader said. That must have been the signal. Instantly the other two Samurai whipped out their swords.

"Pig! Dog!" the second Samurai raged. "You caused us to lose face before our lord. Honor requires your life!"

"Give us your money and your goods," said the third, "and perhaps we shall let you live. And do not attempt to touch your dagger. Our skilled swords will cut you down before you can draw it."

Kenji fell to the ground, trembling and begging for forgiveness. Slowly he reached into his pack, gripping the handle of one of his throwing knives concealed there. In one swift motion, he flung the heavy pack into the leader, knocking him to the ground. Diving and rolling beneath the swords of the other two Samurai, he ripped upwards with his dagger, slashing the second man viciously in the groin. The Samurai groaned and fell.

Springing to his feet, Kenji saw the third guard charging at him, while the leader drew his own sword and maneuvered behind the Ninja. Without hesitation, Kenji threw his dagger underhand style into the charging man's right thigh and stepped aside. The dagger buried itself deeply in the guard's leg, causing him to howl and topple forward, impaling himself on the thrusting sword of the leader. Kenji charged them unexpectedly and shoved them to the ground. Drawing his second throwing knife by the blade, and snapping the thread that suspended it behind his neck, Kenji threw it at the second guard who had been wounded in the groin. The man was struggling to rise as Kenji's knife pierced his throat, dropping him instantly. Kenji drew his final two throwing knives from the wrappings around his ankles, as the leader disentangled himself from the corpse of the third man. He rose and faced Kenji warily.

"You have killed two of my men," the leader said, "good men as well. Only a Ninja could do what you have done. But the element of surprise upon which you rely is gone. And I

have my sword, while you only have three knives. Are you ready to die, Ninja?"

"It is you who shall die, Samurai. I was trained as a child in Tanto-jitsu. I can hit a flying sparrow at thirty paces with my blades, and bring it to the ground alive."

"We shall see," the leader said. "But this much is certain. One of us shall not survive." With that he charged. Kenji threw his third knife, and the Samurai swatted it away. But the fourth knife followed quickly, spinning in the moonlight to strike the man in the chest. Kenji drew the dagger from his waist.

The Samurai halted and laughed boldly, pulling the dagger from his chest and hurling it away into the darkness. "I have you now, Ninja. You only have one knife left, and your last blade did not cause a serious wound. Surrender your life and I shall make the end quick. I will not stop until I kill you."

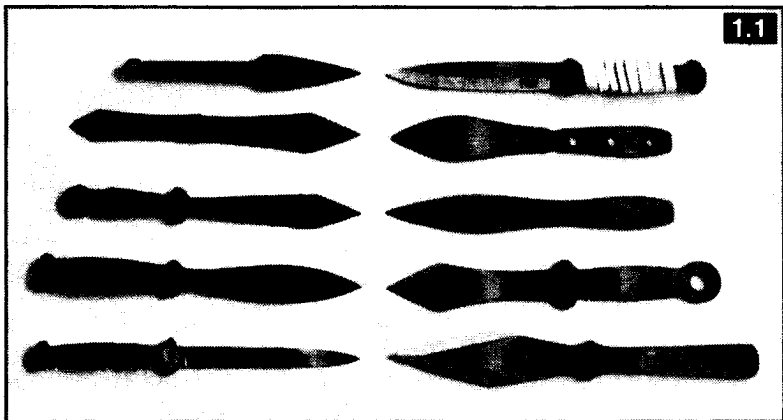
"That you shall never do," Kenji said. He circled around the Samurai, who put his back to a tree. "For you see, Samurai, my blades are poisoned. Even now you feel the sharp fingers of its grip, which will soon crush your heart. Even if I let you go, and you ran as fast as you can—you would not make it back to the castle. And there is no antidote."

The Samurai leaned more heavily against the tree. "Then I will shout until one of the patrols hear me!"

The Samurai opened his mouth to yell, but it was filled with Kenji's fifth dagger. Expertly thrown, the blade pierced the back of the man's throat, effectively nailing his head to the tree. The corpse convulsed and sagged. Kenji retrieved his knives, stripped the bodies, and hid them as bandits would. The men would not be missed or found until the next day at the earliest. By that time, the counterattack on the invaders would have begun.

# SECTION ONE:

## Obtaining and Maintaining Throwing Knives



To obtain throwing knives, look through the pages of any martial arts magazines and you can usually find a supplier. Knives may also be found in surplus shops, at gun shows and at flea markets. (Photo 1.1 shows a number of throwing knife designs.)

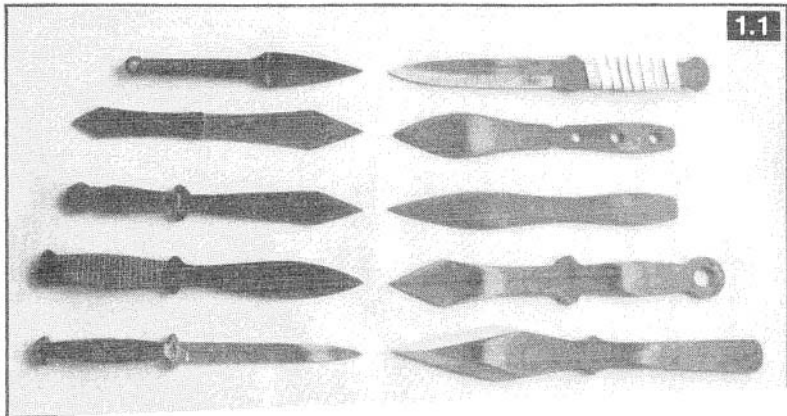
How many throwing knives should a Ninja own? For effective practice, a Ninja should own at least a dozen knives of the same kind. That is a minimum number. If they cannot be acquired all at once, they should be purchased a few at a time over a short period. Twenty or two dozen knives would be more advantageous for the Ninja who can afford them. This will cover any knives which are damaged, lost, etc.

Throwing knives are relatively easy to maintain. They should be kept clean, dry and rust free. Some throwing knives do not have to be sharpened. Others can be sharpened with a mill-bastard file. Still others require the use of an oil stone. Take the appropriate sharpening measures, depending upon which type of throwing knives are owned.

Throwing knives are difficult to destroy under normal use. If they become bent, they can be hammered or bent flat once more. On the rare occasion that a throwing knife does break, it should be thrown away and replaced.

# Throwing Knives

1.1



## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

Another important factor to consider is design. A Ninja may wish to own more than one type of throwing knife. Many of the current designs throw well, with practice, but the most important factors with regard to throwing knives are:

Length

Weight

Balance

Length is the first crucial factor. For a throwing knife to have good flight characteristics, power and penetration, it must be at least nine and no more than sixteen inches in length. A knife any shorter than nine inches will often result in poor penetration; any length beyond sixteen inches will cause the knife to be awkward and difficult to throw. Smaller throwing knives may be used as distractions, but they seldom cause serious wounds, and they are virtually nonlethal.

The weight of a throwing knife is also important. Among trained knife throwers, a well known approximate ratio of one inch to the ounce is standard knowledge. Therefore, a nine-inch throwing knife should weigh approximately nine ounces, and a sixteen-inch throwing knife should weigh approximately sixteen ounces. If a knife is too light, it will have poor flight characteristics and not enough hitting power. If a knife is too heavy, it is difficult to throw, has a shorter range and is slow. An old Ninja maxim states that, "A thrown knife should not fly like a feather or a rock, but like the beak of a hawk."

Last but not least, balance is another important factor determined by a throwing knife's design. It is inherently related to the other two factors. The finest and most versatile throwing knives can be thrown either by the handle or by the blade. They are balanced exactly in the center of the knife. Test this by balancing the knife on the end of one finger to find its center of gravity.

Other knives are meant to be thrown by holding the handle. These knives have blade ends which are heavier than the ends of the handles. The balancing point will often

## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

be found approximately in the center of the knife or up to one inch toward the handle. Such knives require round numbers of spins in order to hit a target point first. Thus a knife thrown by the handle must make one, two, three—up to five or six complete revolutions in order to strike home. Any increment of half revolutions will not strike the target point first. If this is not clear at this point, the matter will be explained in the section on throwing methods.

Still other throwing knives are designed to be thrown by holding the blade. Such knives have lighter blades and heavier handles. The blade's center of gravity will be found anywhere from approximate center up to a inch toward the point of the blade. These knives must be thrown in half increment rotations. Therefore, in order to land point first, knives thrown by holding the blade must make anywhere from  $1\frac{1}{2}$  up to  $5\frac{1}{2}$  and  $6\frac{1}{2}$  revolutions in order to hit home.

The universal throwing knife is the most versatile and easiest knife to begin training with. Handle-thrown knives are the second best. Blade-thrown knives are slightly more difficult to master for beginners.

Other facts about throwing knives.

Do not be surprised if throwing knives do not resemble regular combat knives. Many throwing knives are flat and do not have regular wood or plastic handles. They can be used in hand-to-hand combat, but that is not their primary function.

A note on throwing ordinary knives and miscellaneous objects:

Any knife (or any object which can be picked up) can be thrown effectively, once a Ninja understands both how an object is balanced, and the basics of throwing: judging distance, throwing methods and rotations. This includes knives and objects not specifically designed for throwing: hunting knives, kitchen knives, and even items seldom considered to have potential as weapons, such as ice picks, scissors and screwdrivers. Once the basics of knife throwing contained in this book are learned, a Ninja can apply those same principles to throwing almost anything. The general



## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

rule of thumb is to find the center of balance of an object, and understand how it flies. For example, a screwdriver can be treated like a knife. If the handle is heavier, throw the object by the blade, using full rotations. If the blade is heavier, throw it by the handle, using half rotations. Practice with such irregular items on large cardboard boxes. It will be surprising just how many “household” items can be transformed into deadly throwing weapons in the hands of a Ninja who has mastered the art of throwing. But be careful; items not designed to be thrown may be damaged or ruined by such practice and training. It is often enough just to know that the principles of Ninja knife throwing can be applied to other objects as well.

One other caution remains to be explained. Knife throwing is a difficult skill to learn which requires dedication, determination and constant practice. Study the following throwing and training methods and practice them consistently. But once in combat, never throw a knife or other weapon unless there is a good chance of distracting, wounding, or slaying one's opponent. A knife which misses and does not affect an opponent results in wasted effort. And it may even supply one's enemy with a weapon he did not have before.

# **SECTION TWO:**

## **Throwing Methods**

The two basic ways of gripping a throwing knife are by the handle and by the blade. The two basic throws are the underhand and the overhand throw. Other more complicated throws are performed with a sidearm motion. All of these techniques, along with some variations, will be presented and discussed in detail in this section. But first, how to carry and conceal throwing knives must be discussed.

### **Carrying and Concealing Throwing Knives**

Obviously, Ninja must either carry throwing knives on them or have them accessible in some way in order for the knives to be useful. There are a variety of carrying and concealment methods, and many more which an inventive Ninja can develop for his or her own use. The most important factor is that the knife must be able to be drawn quickly. The method of transporting a throwing knife must also be safe and comfortable to the wearer. If concealment is a concern, the knife should be invisible and silent. Here are some of the basic methods of carrying and concealing throwing knives:

1. Carry the knife strapped to the leg or the arm, or tucked in a boot or armband.
2. Carry the knife at the waist, in a sheath or tucked in under a belt, sash, etc.
3. Suspend the knife behind the neck or beneath an armpit by means of a loop of thread which should snap easily, releasing the knife for use.
4. Carry the knife in the headband/mask wrappings.
5. Carry the knife concealed, but readily accessible, in secret pouches or storage compartments in briefcases, packs, books, etc.

## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

These are only a few of the possibilities. By now, the reader has probably come up with some of his or her own ideas. Try them out; invention and adaptation is an important part of Ninjitsu.

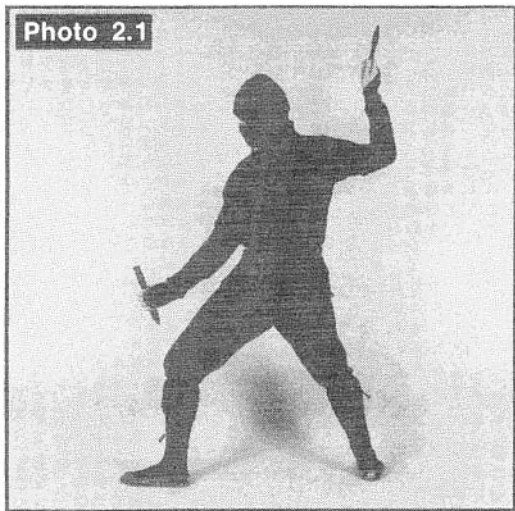


## The Throwing Stance

A Ninja should learn to throw knives accurately from any position (even lying prone or hanging upside down), but begin with the “Neko” or cat stance. The feet should form a ninety degree angle and should be comfortably separated one to one and a half shoulder widths apart. Most of the weight should be centered over the rear leg. As part of the proper throw, the weight should shift to the front leg and the hips and shoulder should twist into the throw, rocketing the body’s entire power into the smooth stroke of the throwing arm. Aiming is calculated through the precise release of the knife just before the end of the stroke, driving the weapon with maximum force, velocity, and accuracy into the target. A smooth follow through should be accompanied by a quick, agile recovery—leaving the Ninja ready for the next throw. See Photos 2.1 thru 2.4 for a depiction of the basic stance, weight shift, follow through and recovery. Practitioners can use this basic technique for most of the throws described in this book, or modify the stance to suit their own needs.

them out, invention and adaptation is an important part of Ninjitsu.

**Photo 2.1**



## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

Photo 2.2



Photo 2.3

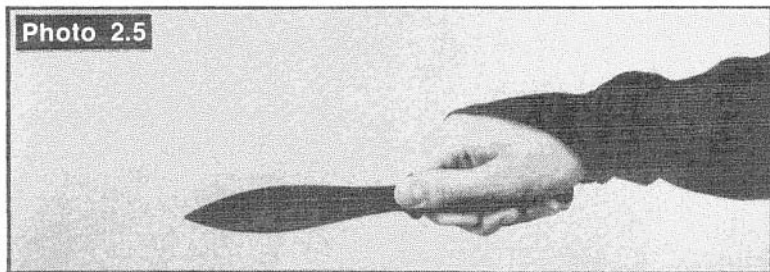


Photo 2.4

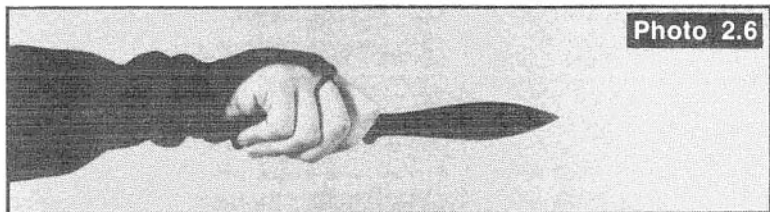


# NINJA KNIFE THROWING

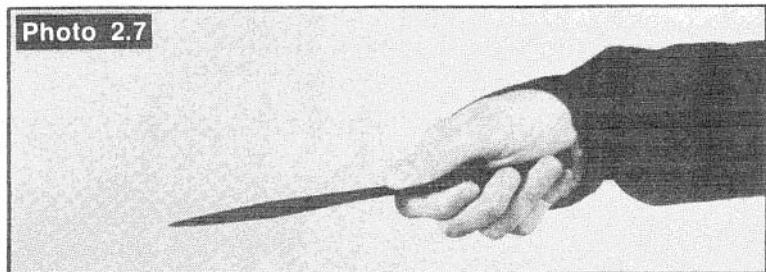
**Photo 2.5**




**Photo 2.6**



**Photo 2.7**





## The Handle Grip

When throwing a knife by the handle, grip the end of the handle so that it is centered in the hand. The thumb should rest against the inside of the handle and the rest of the fingers should curl around the handle securely (see Photos 2.5 thru 2.8). Always throw knives so that they travel vertically. Knives can be thrown horizontally, but they travel and strike with less velocity, hitting power, and penetration at longer distances.



Photo 2.8

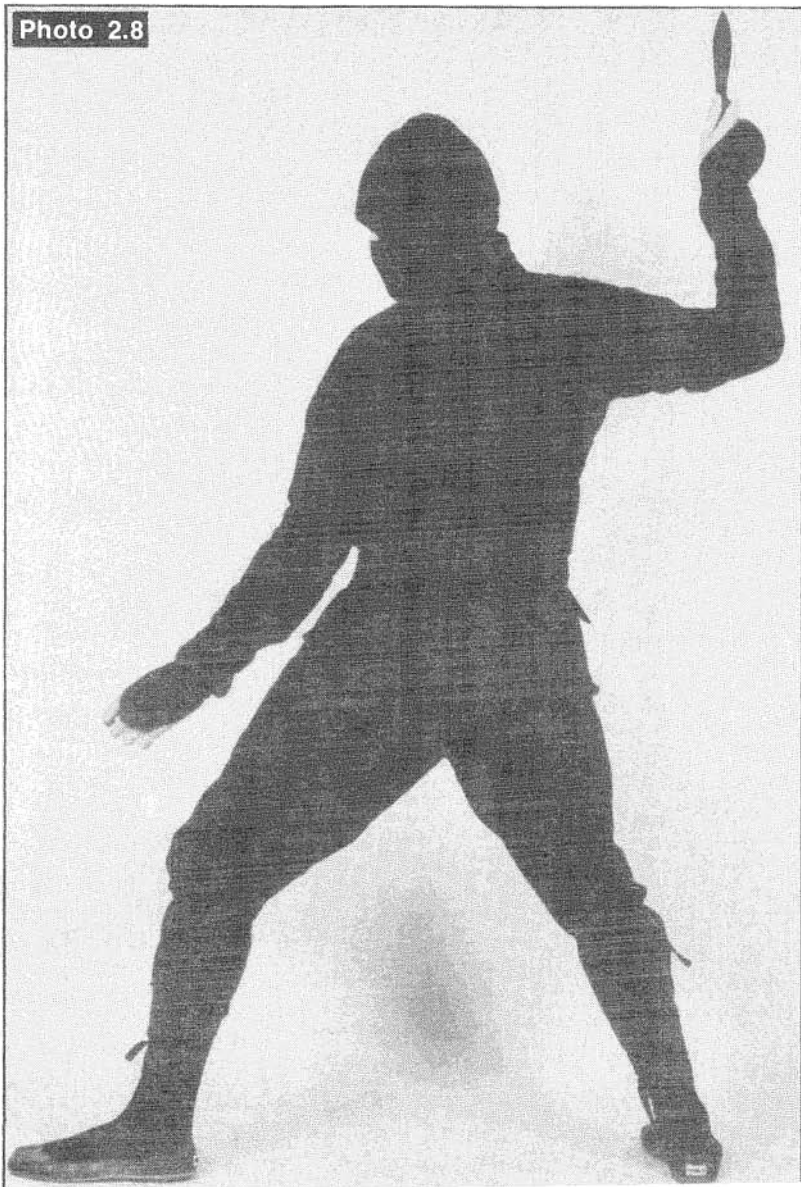


Photo 2.9

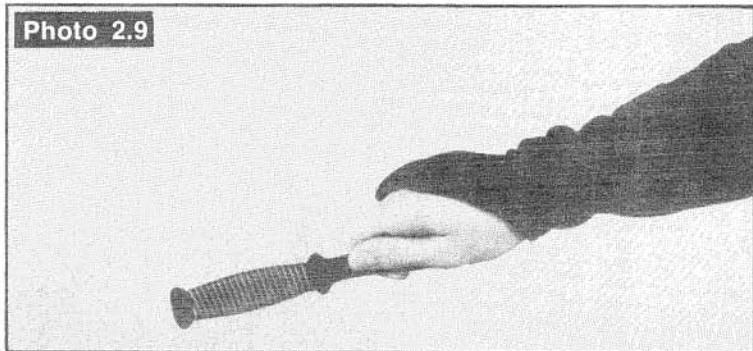


Photo 2.10

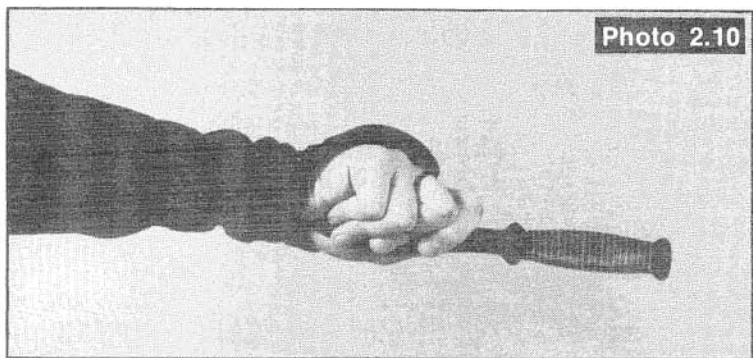
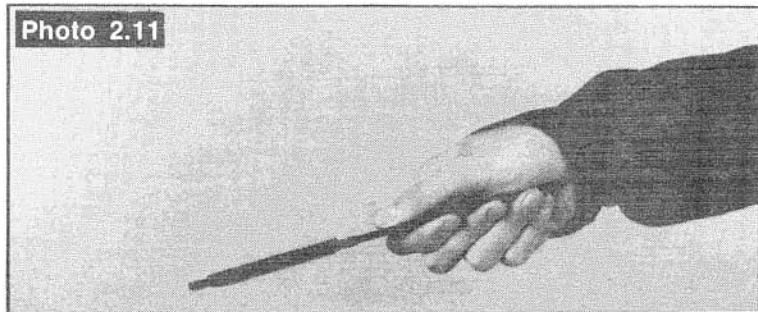


Photo 2.11



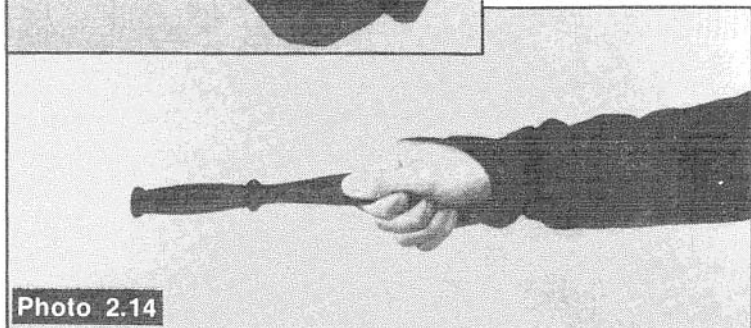
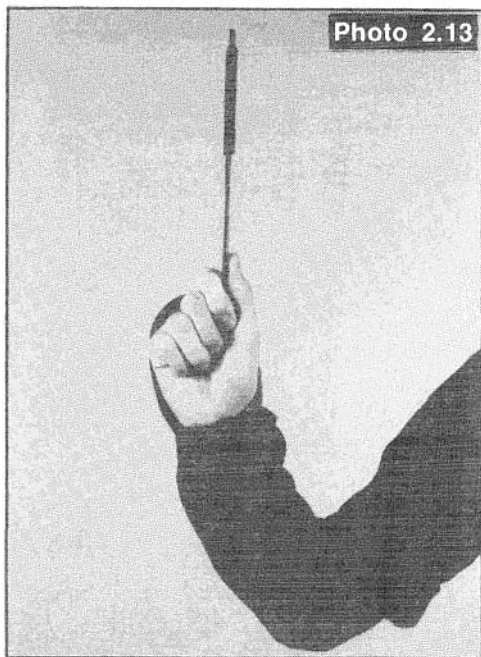


## The Blade Grip

To throw a knife by the blade (see Photos 2.9 thru 2.12), grip the end of the blade with the thumb running parallel to the length of the blade and the rest of the fingers curled up against the opposite side. Again, throw the knife vertically.

Photo 2.12





...other grips are worth mentioning. These are the pinch



**Photo 2.14**

Two other grips are worth mentioning. These are the pinch grip (see Photos 2.13 thru 2.15), and the palm grip (see Photos 2.16 thru 2.18). The pinch grip is performed by pinching either the end of the handle or the point, primarily between the thumb and forefinger. The palm grip is performed by cupping the blade or the handle against the open palm, and holding the knife against the palm with the thumb. These grips can be used to throw underhand, overhand, sidearm, vertically, or horizontally. All of these throws should be practiced according to the guidelines which follow.

## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

Photo 2.15



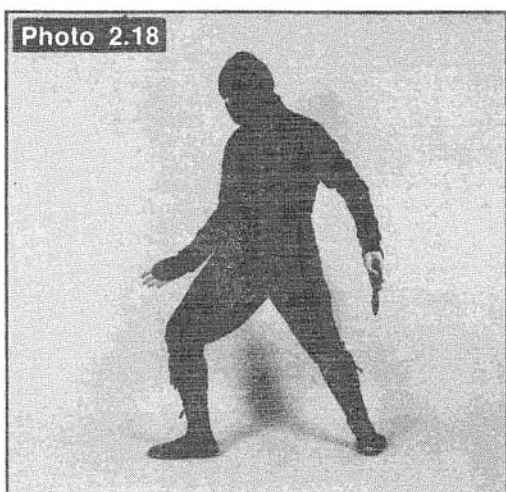
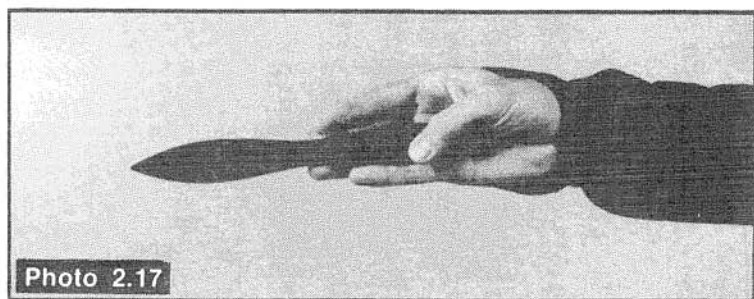
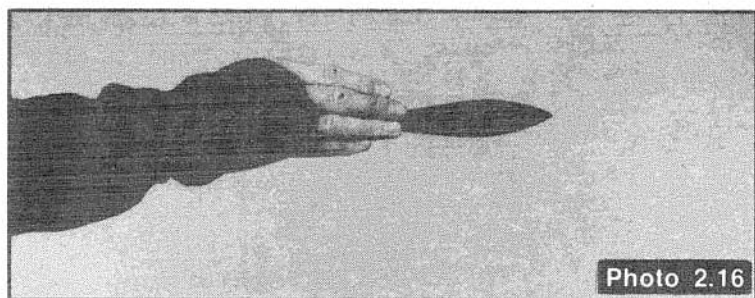
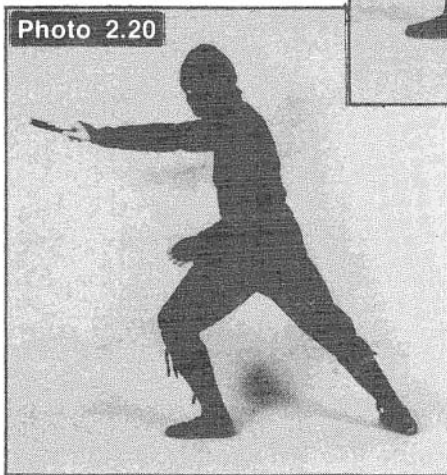





Photo 2.19



Photo 2.20





## The Overhand Throw

After choosing the proper grip, cock the throwing arm just behind the ear. Shifting the weight as explained in the description of the throwing stance, cast the throwing arm forward at the target, releasing the throwing knife just before the end of the stroke. Follow through and recover. Photos 2.19 and 2.20 show a Ninja using a blade grip in the overhand throw.



## The Underhand Throw

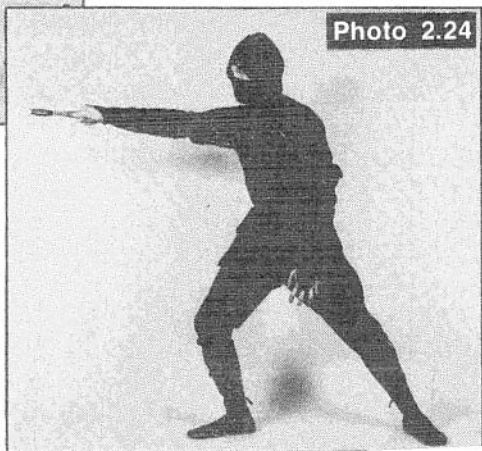
After selecting the proper grip, cock the throwing arm back behind the hip. Propel the throwing arm forward, releasing the throwing knife at the proper moment, just before the end of the stroke. Follow through and recover. Photos 2.21 and 2.22 show a Ninja using a palm grip in the underhand throw. In this particular type of throw, the knife is thrown straight into the target, usually at close range (approximately ten feet or less). An interesting variation of this throw reverses the motion, beginning with the knife in front of the thrower. Ninja use this technique to throw knives at pursuers while running.

Photo 2.21



Photo 2.22





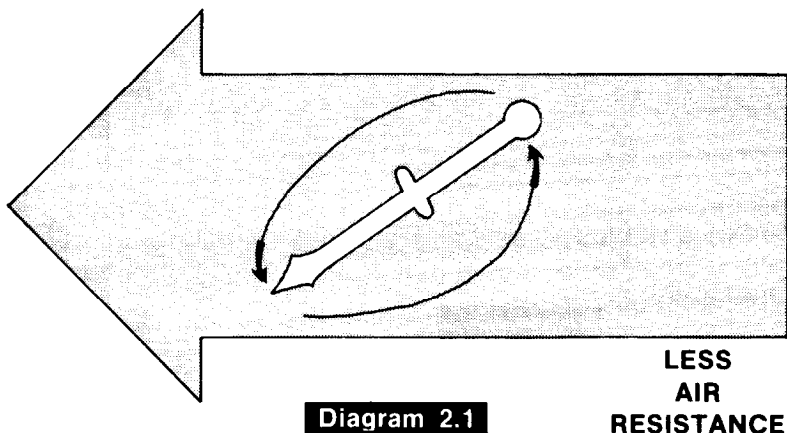


## Sidearm Throwing

The throwing techniques already mentioned are used to throw either forwards or backwards. Similar to throwing a frisbee or a baseball, sidearm knife throwing is more difficult to master and requires a great deal of practice and training. After selecting the proper grip, bring the throwing arm back into the throwing position. Whether the knife is held to the inside or the outside of the body, the throwing arm is swung across the front of the body and released precisely before the end of the cast. Follow through and recover. Photos 2.23 and 2.24 show a Ninja using a pinch grip in the sidearm throw. The most difficult part of sidearm throwing is getting the knife to fly straight at the target. Usually the knife goes to one side or the other when beginners start practicing this throw. The problem usually has to do with an improper release.

## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

### Vertically Thrown Knife viewed from the side



#### Vertical and Horizontal Throwing

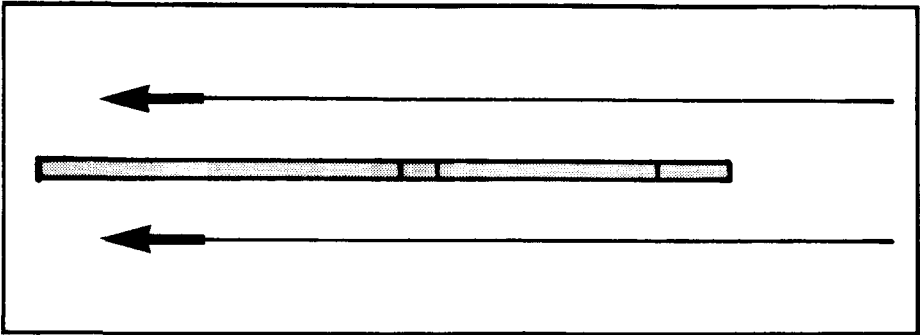
First, the difference between vertical and horizontal throwing should be made clear. When vertically thrown, and when viewed from the side as it travels through the air, a throwing knife looks similar to the knife in Diagram 2.1. Vertically thrown knives travel swifter because they have less air resistance. Horizontally thrown knives, viewed in flight from the side, look similar to the knife in Diagram 2.2. Because it travels flat against the wind, a horizontally thrown knife meets greater resistance in the air. This decreases distance, velocity and penetration.

For short distances, however (approximately 5 to 10 feet), the horizontal throw is just as effective.

## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

### Horizontally Thrown Knife viewed from the side

#### A. STRAIGHT THROW (SHORT DISTANCES)



#### B. SPINNING THROW

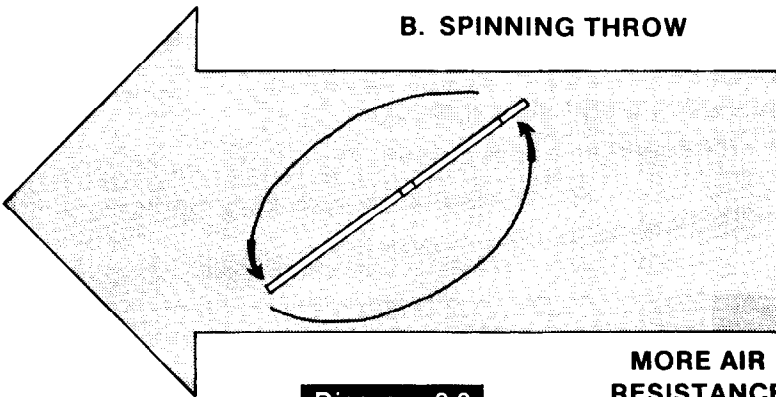


Diagram 2.2

**MORE AIR  
RESISTANCE  
AT GREATER  
RANGES**



## **NINJA KNIFE THROWING**

### **Estimating Distances**

A knife thrower must be able to judge distances with a good degree of precision in order to throw accurately. Such ability can only be gained from long hours of practice. Begin with established distances which are marked off. (See the following section on training.) Once a Ninja learns to hit a target from any distance from five to thirty feet, he or she should practice to be able to hit the target at any range in between. Long distance throws from thirty up to fifty feet can be practiced in advanced training.

### **Knife Rotations**

Short range throws, approximately ten feet or less, usually cause a knife to travel in a straight line to the target. Beyond this range, however, throwing knives execute one or more spins or half spins (up to several in number) before striking the target. Only through experience and dedicated training can a Ninja learn to estimate distance and judge how many rotations or half rotations a knife will need to make in order to strike a target point first. Remember that knives thrown by the handle must execute whole or complete spins (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, etc). Knives thrown by the blade must execute a number of half spins ( $1/2$ ,  $1\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $2\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $4\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $5\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $6\frac{1}{2}$ , etc.) Once the basic theories and principles listed in this section have been learned, the Ninja must establish an effective training program.

# **SECTION THREE:**

## **Training Methods and Safety Concerns**

### **Safety**

The most important basic safety principles are:

1. Always wear safety glasses or goggles during any kind of practice. Most serious injuries, if they do occur, are usually to the eyes. Throwing knives, especially at short ranges, sometimes take unexpected bounces, and may rebound back at the thrower.

2. Always wear a mouthpiece, such as the kind worn by boxers and football players, to protect the teeth. Broken teeth are not serious injuries, but dental work is expensive.

3. Observers should always stand behind the thrower and stay alert when knives are being thrown.

4. Place a backstop and target properly in order to minimize any chance of a stray knife injuring people, pets, or property.

5. Remember that throwing knives are not toys. They are deadly weapons. Treat them as such at all times.

6. Keep throwing knives away from small children or irresponsible adults.

7. Never throw a knife carelessly or in jest. Serious injury usually results from *fooling around* with dangerous weapons.

### **When to Train**

Set up a consistent schedule to throw knives at least three times each week. Stick to the schedule with dedication and determination. Throw at least two hundred knife casts for each of the three weekly training sessions. Concentrate on mastering each of the throwing techniques in this book one

## **NINJA KNIFE THROWING**

at a time. Do not move onto the next technique until the one before it is mastered. Work on proper technique first; a thrown knife should stick firmly in the target. Second, work on accuracy. Third, work on power. Fourth, work on speed. Fifth and finally, work on throwing from any position. A Ninja should be able to throw a knife accurately at any time, from any position.

### **Where to Train**

Select a safe area, inside or outside, with a proper backstop and target. Beginning practitioners are normally very wild with their throws. If the target is inside, in a room or basement for example, there should not be any windows, furniture, or any other objects nearby which could be damaged. The best solution is to use an entire wall as a backstop, either covering it with wood or padding. Never throw knives at plaster or concrete walls. Plasterboard will not hold up long and is costly to repair. Knives may go through the plasterboard and become lost in between the walls. Knives thrown against concrete will dull, bend, or even break. They will also have a tendency to bounce off the wall, which is dangerous.

Outside, make certain that there is plenty of clear room around in order to throw. There should not be any people, pets, or property within range of the target. Be aware, also, that throwing knives outside will often attract a good deal of attention. Onlookers should be briefed about the dangers involved with being around a knife thrower.

### **The Backstop**

Whether a target is used inside or outside, it needs to have a backstop to stop the knives thrown at it. The backstop provides a convenient place to hang a variety of targets, most of which can be made out of paper. Constructing a good backstop that will last for years is often neglected, but it is as important as purchasing the right knives. It requires a certain amount of time, work and money, but every serious practitioner of Ninjitsu should make one. A basic design for

## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

a portable/stationary backdrop is given below. The design is a simple one, and can be modified to fit the specific needs of the user (see Diagram 3.1, throwing knife backstop).

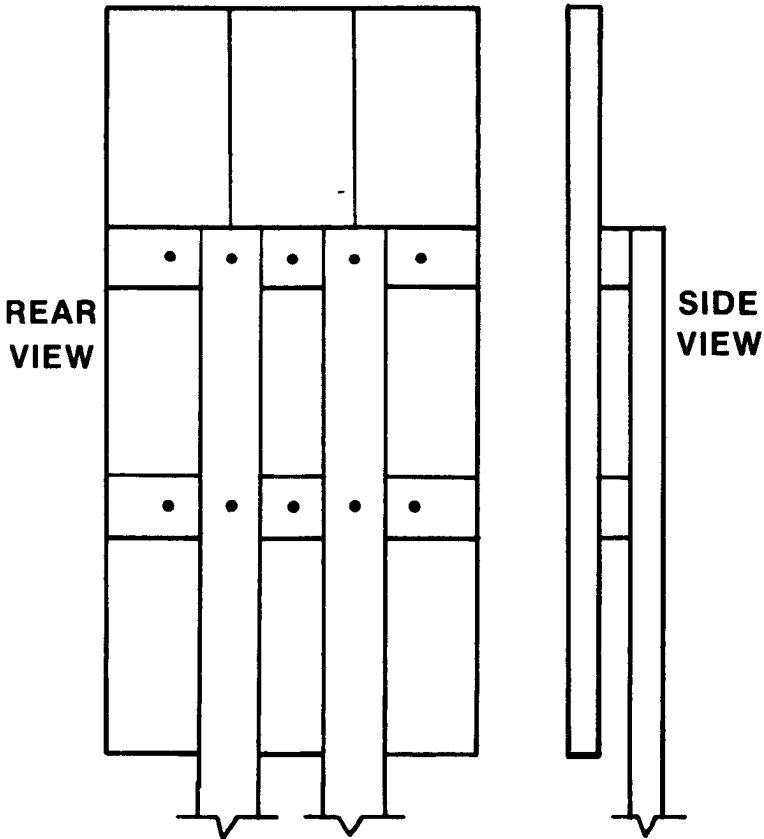


Diagram 3.1

### Materials Needed:

- (3) 6'x2"x12" planks of soft pine
- (3) 6'x2"x4" boards
- (10) 4" carriage bolts (or use at least twice as many nails for a stationary backstop)

## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

### Tools Required:

#### Saw

Drill with proper bit to make the holes for the bolts

Wrench or ratchet to insert and remove bolts (or a hammer to pound in the nails of stationary target)

The construction of the backstop is simple and understandable, even from glancing at the diagram. The portable backstop is recommended over the stationary kind as it can be disassembled, transported and reassembled elsewhere in minutes. As well as transporting much easier, it can be used inside or outside.

When putting the backstop together, make sure that the bolts or nails do not protrude out of the front of the target. This will prevent throwing knives from bending and breaking. If the supporting post will be placed in the ground, either by driving them in or using a posthole digger, cut them to a point and place them two feet into the earth. The backstop can also be leaned against a tree or wall.

If the backstop will be left outside for any length of time, protect the wood by treating it with a coat or two of protective stain or paint. Use the kind, commonly available, for outdoor wood and furniture. With care, the backstop will last for a long while, depending on how much it is used. But with consistent training one or more of the front boards will need to be replaced eventually. This is a relatively simple task. Once the backstop is in place in a proper area, a Ninja will want to consider targets.

### Targets

The beginning practitioner may simply wish to mark off a distance of ten feet from the backstop and use that as a target. At first, just concentrate on hitting the target. Throw at least ten knives at a time in order to avoid excessive trips to and around the target to retrieve knives. Next, try to strike the target with all ten knives and make them stick. Do not throw hard. Power is one of the last areas to work on. It is better to work on technique and accuracy at first; power and speed will come later, with more time and practice. A Ninja must learn to be patient.

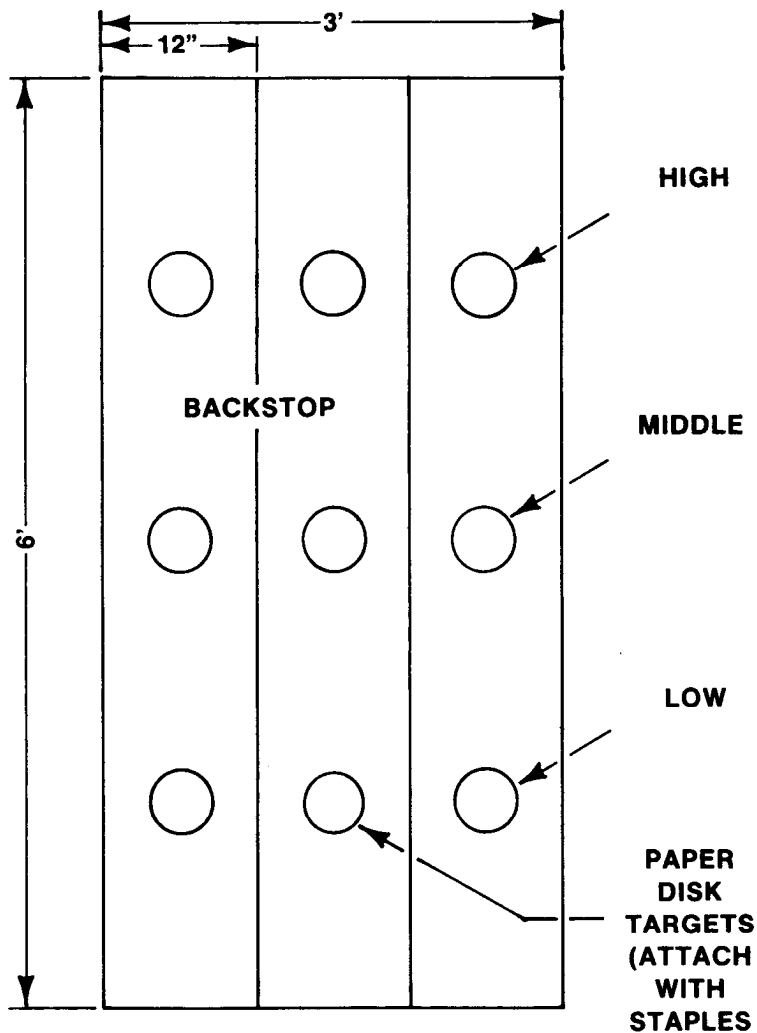
## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

Practice the following throws, one at a time. Do not move onto the next until it is consistently possible to make nine out of ten knives stick. These are only the basic throws, a Ninja will go on to develop throws of his or her own. Do not be surprised if some throws are more difficult to master than others. Often this will vary from person to person. Ninja should always work at their own speed. Experience is the greatest teacher.

1. Overhand Throw
2. Underhand Throw
3. Sidearm Throw
4. Palm Grip Throw
5. Pinch Grip Throw
6. Backwards Throw

If it will help to focus on one spot for aiming, concentrate on the center of the middle board of the backstop. Staple or tack an eight inch paper disk there if an actual target is desired. Paper plates can also be used. After a Ninja learns to hit this target consistently, he or she should switch to a four inch paper disk, and then a two inch, and finally a one inch disk. These can be cut out of colored paper or painted on newspaper or newsprint with a template and a can of spray paint. Arrange nine disk targets on the backstop as shown in Diagram 3.2. This will avoid any chance of the knives bouncing off each other. A Ninja is ready to move onto a smaller sized disk target when he or she can place one knife in each of the nine paper disks.

## Advanced Disk Targets Diagram 3.2



## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

### Moving Targets

Once the basic skills are mastered, at least once a week (one of the three weekly sessions) a Ninja will want to train with live, moving targets. What could be a more challenging target than another Ninja? But one thing must be remembered: **NEVER USE REAL KNIVES WHILE PRACTICING WITH LIVE OPPONENTS.** Instead, use one of the practice knife patterns (see Diagram 3.3) to fashion appropriate practice weapons out of soft wood, plastic or hard rubber. Other designs can be invented, but they should fly well, similar to a real throwing knife, and they should not have sharp points. A crude, but effective training weapon can also be made from cutting a 1/2 inch diameter dowel rod into 10 to 12 inch lengths and rounding the ends. Such training weapons will not fly exactly like throwing knives, but the flight characteristics will be close enough. They may hurt a bit to get hit with one, especially in the face, so wear the eye and mouth protection. But it will be better than being struck with a real throwing knife. Be prepared for some slight injuries and bruises, and try to concentrate on accuracy rather than power.

To make the practice more realistic and instructional, coat the tip of the knife in Vaseline. This will allow both the thrower and the target to know if the point of the practice knife struck correctly or not, as a spot of Vaseline will remain. The Vaseline will usually wash out of most clothing. For added realism, mix a little red food coloring in with the Vaseline. Practicing Ninja may wish to carry a small pot of this *practice blood* with them to dip their knives into.

The thrower will concentrate on hitting the target accurately. The opponent will concentrate on dodging or *reaching* the thrower without getting hit. Try to make the training as realistic as possible, and be honest. Practice safely. The possibilities for such training are endless, limited only by the imagination of the Ninja participating in it. Practitioners must ask themselves:

Thrower: How can I best distract, wound, or kill my opponent?

Target: How can I avoid getting hit and take out my opponent?



## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

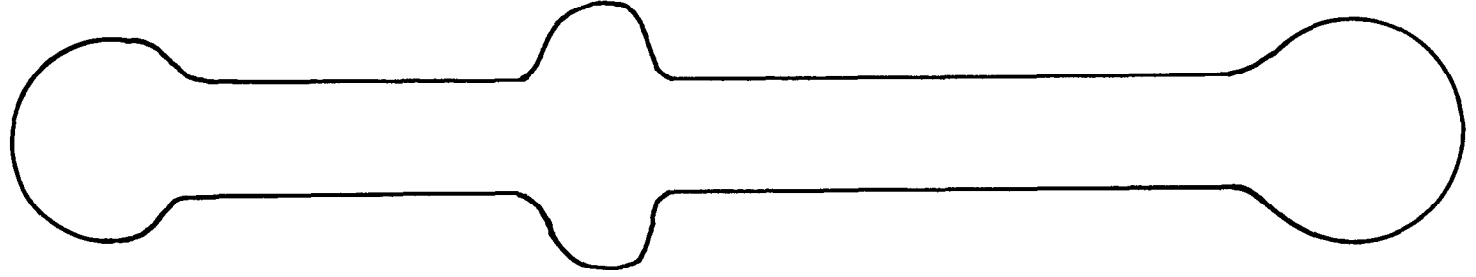
Two or more practitioners will want to work through a number of scenarios. What if both Ninjas have throwing knives? What if they are inside/outside, in the forest/city, or in the day/night? Practicing realistic situations will prepare the knife throwing Ninja for actual combat.

Once Ninja have mastered the basic skills at ten feet, and have begun training with live targets, at least twice each week (two of the three weekly training sessions), they should still throw two hundred knives at their target. Mark or stake off distances of 5, 10, 15, 20, 25 and 30 feet from the target. Some of the longer ranges will be difficult to manage inside. This can also be performed with tape on floors or bright spray paint on grass. The tape can always be removed from the floor, and the spray paint will eventually wear away on the grass. Begin to practice from these distances. Some techniques will undoubtedly prove to be better than others at some ranges, but this also may differ from person to person. It is up to practitioners to experiment and determine what works best at a given range in a specific situation. Only through actual practice and experience can useful knowledge be gained.

Many beginning practitioners complain of losing some of their knives, especially their practice knives for live target training, due to bad throws, rebounds, and misses which become difficult to find. To at least partially eliminate this difficulty, a number of steps can be taken. One solution is to spray paint the knives with a bright color. Another solution is to tie a bright colored length of cord or wool to the knife. The string will not affect the flight of the knife much, but it will make it easier to find.

### Long Range Throws

Knives are seldom thrown over distances of thirty feet, but once Ninja have gained a mastery of the basic skills at this distance, they may wish to mark or stake out longer ranges of 35, 40, 45 and 50 feet. Fifty feet is the approximate maximum range for a thrown knife. Such long range throws require exceptional skill, power, and control to make a knife stick at such a distance.



NOT  
TO  
SCALE



37

**Diagram 3.3**  
**Practice Knife Patterns**

10-12" LONG

## **NINJA KNIFE THROWING**

The key to such training is practice. Nothing at all will be learned simply by reading about these techniques. A true Ninja must consistently go out three times each week and throw two hundred knives. This training must continue in all kinds of weather conditions for at least one year, or until the basic skills of knife throwing are mastered.

## **SECTION FOUR:**

### **Knife Throwing in Combat**

In actual combat, Ninja throw knives for three primary purposes:

- 1) To Distract
- 2) To Wound
- 3) To Kill

There are other secondary and special uses, but these are the three most basic purposes.

#### **To Distract**

Most people are easily distracted by something thrown at them, especially if it is thrown at their face. There is a natural reaction to protect the face and eyes. To effectively distract an opponent, throw a knife as quickly and as accurately as possible at his face. Usually an opponent will try to avoid or dodge the knife. This will gain the Ninja time to escape, create an opening for an attack, or perform some other action. It doesn't matter if the knife hits the target or not, but if it does, so much the better.

#### **To Wound**

To wound an opponent is more difficult. The best chance is to strike the softer areas of the lower torso, such as the abdomen and the kidneys. The upper portions of the torso are protected by bone. The thighs are a good wounding target. A throwing knife in the muscle of the upper leg makes running difficult or impossible. Such a wound will give pause to any enemy. It may only slow him down, or it may drop him or even strike the femoral artery and cause death from blood loss in minutes.

## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

### To Kill

To kill an opponent with a knife throw is the most difficult purpose to achieve. The best lethal target is the throat or neck. An accurately thrown blade can sever the windpipe, one of the jugular veins, or even the spinal cord. Other lethal targets are:

The Eyes

The Temples

The Open Mouth

Of course all of these targets are difficult to hit. Contrary to accounts on television and in the movies, thrown knives to the upper torso are seldom fatal. Most people cannot throw hard enough to pierce the muscle and bone of the rib cage in order to damage the major internal organs. A fortunate throw is always possible, but should not be counted on or expected in actual combat. The result of a thrown knife to the upper torso will most likely be a wound of varied seriousness.

### Secondary Uses

A Ninja may intentionally throw a knife so that it lands flat or strikes a target with the butt of the handle, in an attempt to subdue or stun an opponent. This is a difficult technique to master, but it can be used to capture enemies alive or simply to render them unconscious. Such stunning blows are usually to the head.

### Special Uses

Ninja may attach small blinding dust bombs, smoke, explosive, or incendiary grenades to throwing knives in order to increase their effectiveness of lethality. A simple flaming knife, used to start fires, can be made by wrapping strips of cloth soaked in flammable liquid around either the handle or the blade (depending upon how the knife will be thrown). The strips are ignited just prior to throwing the knife.



## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

Poisoned knives are another special use. Even a nick or a scratch from a poisoned throwing knife can prove fatal. Poisoned throwing knives can be made by coating the blade with poison paste. It is best to throw poisoned throwing knives by the handle. Avoid coming in direct contact with the poison.



## **SECTION FIVE:**

# **Defense Against Thrown Knives**

A Ninja needs to be prepared to defend him or herself against thrown knives. There are three basic ways to accomplish this:

- 1) Dodging
- 2) Blocking
- 3) Catching

These are listed in order of their difficulty to perform.

### **Dodging**

In order to successfully evade thrown knives, a Ninja must understand how a knife flies when it is thrown. Once this is accurately understood, a Ninja can effectively judge how a knife will come at him. Fortunately, a thrown knife is committed to its path of flight once the thrower releases it. If the Ninja can time his actions just right, he will move just a split second before the knife is released. At that point the thrower is committed and cannot take back his action. By the time the knife reaches its target, the Ninja is no longer there. A knife is not a guided missile; it will not actively seek out its target if the target moves, but will continue along its path of flight. Once a Ninja understands this, he or she can duck under, sidestep, or otherwise evade a thrown knife. This should be practiced with safe practice knives only. Such knowledge will prove invaluable to attacker and defender alike.

### **Blocking**

Thrown knives can also be knocked down, blocked, or otherwise deflected out of the air with weapons, everyday objects, or even by hand. Always evade the knife first, if



## NINJA KNIFE THROWING

possible. In this way, if the block fails, no injury will result. With a sword or staff, for example, a Ninja can simply sweep the knife out of the air. If a weapon is not handy, then any object (such as a book or even a kitchen post) can be used. Timing is important.

Swatting knives out of the air by hand is dangerous and not recommended to anyone who is not a highly trained Ninja. This should be practiced with caution and with safe practice knives. Concentrate on slapping the knife away with the hand or the firearm. The tell-tale training blood will tell how successful the attempt was.

### Catching

Snatching a thrown knife out of the air without harm requires the utmost mastery, and is not recommended to anyone but Ninjitsu masters. This technique should not be practiced until one's dodging and blocking skills are flawless. Evade the knife first, and try to pinch or snatch the spinning handle out of the air as it goes by. **DO NOT TRY THESE DANGEROUS TECHNIQUES WITH REAL KNIVES.**

### Treating Throwing Knife Injuries

Whether in practice or in actual combat, throwing knife injuries may result. A Ninja must be prepared for any situation, even for the eventuality that despite all his training, he may become wounded. Treat any wound seriously and take care of it as soon as possible. Even with small wounds there is always the chance of poison or infection. Remember that the best treatment is prevention; avoid becoming a casualty. Safety must always be maintained to the highest degree possible.

If a wound does occur, seek the best medical attention possible immediately. Apply direct pressure first. If that is not effective, apply indirect pressure and elevate the wounded portion of the body (except in the case of head wounds). A true Ninja should be familiar with the types of wounds which throwing knives can possibly cause, and how such wounds should be treated. Any serious Ninja will know advanced first aid and will never be without an emergency first aid kit to deal with both major and minor injuries.

# AFTERWORD

Some misinformed people believe that the knife is the favorite or even the preferred weapon of the Ninja. This is not true. Although a knife is the first weapon, outside of the weapons of mind and body, that a Ninja trains with, to say that a knife is the favorite weapon of the Ninja is erroneous. Ninja do not have *favorite* weapons. They are capable of using all weapons and are free to use no weapons. Knife throwing is just one facet of Tanto-jitsu (knife art), which is in turn only one facet of The Way.